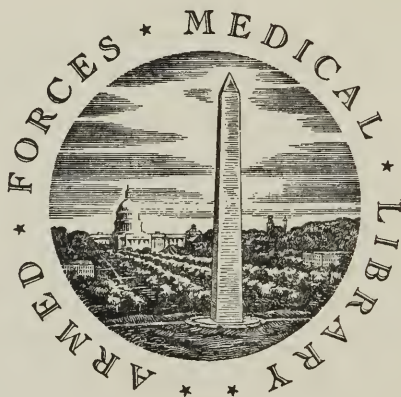


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AN
INAUGURAL ESSAY
ON
HYPOCHONDRIASIS.

SUBMITTED TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE
REVEREND JOHN ANDREWS, D. D. PROVOST
(PRO TEMPORE),
THE TRUSTEES AND MEDICAL FACULTY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA,
ON THE
FIFTH DAY OF JUNE, 1805,
FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.



BY WILLIAM GIBBONS, OF PENNSYLVANIA.

MEMBER OF THE PHILADELPHIA MEDICAL SOCIETY.

“Qu’avec les Anciens on appelle sympathie, cette correspondance singulière des différentes parties du corps, ou qu’avec les modernes on la considère comme un rapport inconnu dans l’action des nerfs, cette sympathie, ou ce rapport existe dans toute l’économie animale, et l’on ne sauroit trop s’appliquer à en observer les effets si l’on veut perfectionner la théorie de la médecine.” BUFFON.

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.....
1805.

DOCTOR JACOB EHRENZELLER,

OF

CHESTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA,

AND TO

DOCTOR JOHN VAUGHAN,

OF

WILMINGTON, DELAWARE,

THIS DISSERTATION

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY THE

AUTHOR.

399020

J. Cleaver with the best
wishes of his Friend and
Now Graduate

the Author



INAUGURAL ESSAY

HYPOCHONDRIASIS.

THE subject of the following dissertation is both difficult and interesting: difficult, because it involves the consideration of the mind: interesting, as it leads to an investigation of one of the most afflicting and troublesome diseases incident to man.

The term hypochondriasis is derived from the two greek words *υπο*, sub, under, and *χονδρος*, cartilago, a cartilage; the ancients supposing a morbid state of the viscera, situated under the cartilages of the ribs, to be the cause of the disease. Several other names have been given to it, as the vapours, low-spirits, spleen, &c. from the different appearances which it assumes.

SYMPTOMS.

These are as various and changeable as the shapes of Proteus, or the colours of the camelion; hence Dr. Mead justly observes: “non unam sedem habet, sed morbus totius corporis est.” The famous Sydenham also remarks, that Hypochondriasis artfully resembles most of the diseases wherewith mankind are afflicted. I shall not therefore attempt to enumerate all the symptoms, but take notice of such only, as are most commonly to be met with.

In general, the first observable, indicate an affection of the stomach, and alimentary canal.— This is evinced by nausea and vomiting; obstinate costiveness, sometimes a diarrhoea; a want of appetite, but now and then an increase or perversion of it; flatulency; acid eructations; cardialgia; pain in the stomach and bowels; an acid or bitter taste in the mouth, &c: to these may be added a copious flow of pale urine, the discharge of which is frequently attended with pain; difficult respiration; palpitation of the heart, &c. The *pulse* is variable but generally slow and weak; sometimes hard.

The state of the body above described is accompanied, or succeeded by a peculiar affection of the mind. The patient is very attentive to the state of his health, and apprehends great danger from

the most trifling circumstance. He is sad, timid, and distrustful, languid, dull, and inactive : he is fond of solitude, but when in company, his disease is always his favourite topic. He anticipates evil in every future event, and is very fearful of death, although he often seems to desire it :

“ Sheds o’er the scene a voluntary gloom,
Requests oblivion and demands the tomb.”

All his fears and apprehensions, however groundless, are accompanied with the most obstinate belief of their reality. He often fancies himself transformed into various animals, forms, and substances ; complains of pain in every part of his body, and believes he is afflicted with all the diseases described by physicians. He even sometimes imagines himself dead, and accordingly, orders preparations to be made for his funeral. The provoking demon of despair, not satisfied with tormenting the miserable victim during the day, at night pursues him to his pillow, where he is

“ Still interrupted by distracted dreams,
That o’er the sick imagination rise,
And in black colours paint the mimic scene.”

Nor does that frightful hag, the *night-mare*, fail to bestride his tortured breast and then,

“ The headlong precipice that thwarts his flight,
The trackless desert, the cold starless night,
And stern eyed murderer with his knife behind,
In dread succession agonize his mind.

Whilst o'er his limbs convulsive tremors fleet ;
 Start in his hands, and struggle in his feet ;
 In vain to speak with quivering lips he tries,
 And strains in palsied lids his tremulous eyes ;
 In vain he wills to run, fly, swim, walk, creep,
 The will presides not in the bower of sleep."

CAUSES.

Various and contradictory are the opinions of medical writers, respecting the cause of this disease. *Boerhaave* (A) attributes it to an atrabiliary humour lodging in the spleen, stomach, and neighbouring viscera. *Hoffman* (B) to a perverted peristaltic motion of the stomach and intestines. *Willis* to an indisposition of the brain and nerves. *Higbmore* (C) to a vitiated state of the stomach. *Sydenham* (D) to a confusion of the spirits. *Mandeville* (E) to a disordered chylication, and a deficiency of spirits. *Junckerus* (F) to an obstructed motion of the blood in the vena portarum and contiguous viscera. *Etmuller* (G) places its seat in the intestines, and *Cheyne* (H) supposes it to arise from an obstruction of some of the abdominal viscera.

(A) Aphorism. de cognoscend. morb. § 1098.

(B) System, med. tom. iii. part iii. chap. 5.

(C) Exercitationes de passione hyster. et affection. Hypo.

(D) Epist. ad. D. Cole.

(E) A Treatise of Hyp. and Hyst. passions, dial. 1st & 2d.

(F) Junckeri conspect. medicinæ, p. 106.

(G) Oper. p. 1820.

(H) English Malady, part ii. chap. vii.

Others, again, have thought differently on the subject: hence it appears, that the notions of the ancients, with respect to the nature of the disease, have been vague and imperfect.

The remote causes may be arranged under two general heads:

Such as act *directly* upon the whole body, or particular parts of it, as the stomach and alimentary canal; and such as act *indirectly*, through the medium of the mind.—Amongst the first are,

EXPOSURE TO COLD, MOIST AIR. The connection of the stomach with every part of the body, has long been observed by medical philosophers.—It has been called the centre of association, and the index of the nervous system. Its sympathetic connection with the external parts of the body, is evinced by numerous facts, and is a circumstance of the utmost importance, in the prevention and cure of disease.

If a person *in high health* expose himself, as in riding or walking, for a short time, to the frost of a cold morning, the action of the stomach will be increased; digestion will go on more rapidly, and hunger succeed sooner, than in a warmer temperature: hence we have more frequent calls for food, and eat more in Winter than in Summer. But if one of a *weak, delicate habit*, expose himself in the same manner, decreased

action of the stomach and consequent (A) indigestion will take place. The former is called by Dr. Darwin, *reverse*, and the latter *direct* sympathy.

A cold atmosphere is more especially injurious to delicate constitutions, when loaded with moisture; being in this case a much better conductor of heat, than when dry, the skin is more effectually deprived of its warmth, and becomes cold, and corrugated: hence the reason why the *east wind*, replete with aqueous vapour, is so much dreaded by dyspeptic and hypochondriac patients.

Thousands are cut off from their friends, and from society, and thousands more linger under cronic complaints, (commonly called nervous) more especially of the stomach, by neglecting *to maintain a proper and equable degree of warmth upon the skin.*

COLD FEET are frequently the remote cause, and always the companions of indigestion. It is of great importance to attend to this connection between the feet and stomach: gout is often translated from the former to the latter, and frequently with fatal consequences.

THE SUDDEN REPELLING, OR CURING OF ERUPTIONS. These when they have continued a

(A) Indigestion, according to Dr Cullen, is distinguished from Hypochondriasis, chiefly by the temperament prevailing in the person affected; hence all those causes which bring on the former, may be reckoned as causes also of the latter.

length of time, by acting as a stimulus to the stomach, become necessary to the due performance of its functions, and when abstracted produce debility in that organ, and consequent indigestion. Thus decreased action in one part, often becomes a circumstance necessary to the healthy action of another : hence the impropriety of suddenly curing habitual ulcers, without substituting an artificial disease, as a seton or an issue.

AN INDOLENT, SEDENTARY LIFE. Exercise is absolutely necessary to a healthy digestion : when abstracted, the food, by remaining too long in the stomach, runs into fermentation, and causes flatulency, acidity, and other dyspeptic symptoms. The heart and arteries sympathise with this inactive state of the stomach, and the whole system is languor and debility. That a connection exists between the action of the heart and arteries, and that of the stomach, cannot be doubted. The operation of antimonials, and emetics ; of digitalis, and of squill, all of which lessen arterial action, is thus explained.

TEA, AND COFFEE, when taken weak bring on debility, by abstracting more nourishing diet ; but when strong they injure the nerves of the stomach. Tea, when applied to the nerves of a frog, was found to destroy their sensibility. In some persons it has produced vertigo, delirium, epilepsy, and paralysis (A).

(A) Professor Barton.

TOBACCO. The use of this *poisonous* drug proves a frequent cause of dyspepsia, by depriving the food of the *saliva* so necessary to digestion. It is, moreover, shown, by the experiments of Pringle, and Macbride, that this liquor retards fermentation in the stomach; hence a deprivation of it quickens that process, the consequences of which have been already mentioned.

EXCESS IN VENERY, brings on seminal weakness, lues venerea, nocturnal pollutions, impotence, &c. When we consider the remarkable connection between the intellectual and genital functions, we are not surprised to find disease in the latter have a great effect upon the mind.—Accordingly the *abuse* of this passion in youth is frequently a cause of Hypochondriasis, in more advanced age. It is also probable that some affections of the mind may induce morbid action in the genital functions: Thus the disease in question frequently counterfeits lues venerea.—In short, whatever tends to induce local debility in the stomach, may be reckoned as remote causes of Hypochondriasis; such as immoderate repletion of the stomach; the too frequent use of emetics; poor diet; opium; bitters or aromatics; large draughts of cold water; frequent intoxication; putrid or acescent aliment, &c.

The causes which act through the medium of the mind, are fear, anxiety, grief, disappointed

love, intense study, and, in short, any kind of intellectual pain.

The mutual influence of body and mind, although a subject familiar to most people, is one, the investigation of which is attended with much difficulty.

Many of the phenomena of intellectual life render it probable, that the exercise of the faculties of the mind, its operations, as well as all our intellectual pleasures, and pains, depend on motion in the brain : but whether or no, this is the case, is not, nor, perhaps, never will be determined. Let it suffice then, for our present purpose, to observe, that the functions of the body and mind appear to be regulated by the same laws ; and that the diversity in both, principally results from a difference in the nature, force, and repetition of stimuli.

Associations, whether mental or corporeal, are produced and varied in the same manner. By any two or more ideas, or motions, occurring together, such a connection is formed between them, that when one takes place, the others have a tendency to accompany or succeed it.—The strength of this connection depends on the repetitions of these synchronous ideas or motions, and the energy with which they are performed ; and according to these circumstances they are more or less easily dissevered : hence the un-

steadiness generally observed in the pursuits of youth, and the volatile character of many adults, who are liable to have their train of thought interrupted by the slightest impression : hence also the more constant, steady, and determined character of age. In the former case, those associations have not occurred often enough, or with a sufficient degree of force, to become permanent : thus inconstancy is often a mark of genius both in children and in men ; in whom new associations readily take place ; the old ones being easily broken, and not standing in the way to oppose them : in the latter, they become firmly established by repetition, and are not to be destroyed but with life.

From the variety of associations, is derived most of our pleasures and pains : they form the philosopher, the poet, the mathematician, the statesman, the savage, and the assassin, according to the *nature* of stimuli. In the choice and application of these consist the important task of education, the influence of which is well set forth in the following lines of Pope :

“ Tis education forms the common mind ;
Just as the twig is bent, the tree ’s inclin’d.”

The influence of the intellectual functions over those of the body, is manifested by numerous facts, and in none is it more evident, than in the passions, as is well evinced in the smiles and

frowns of those around us : but what more immediately concerns our present enquiry, is their connection with the stomach.

The stimulus of pleasurable sensation, contributes much to the due performance of many of the natural, and vital functions, as the action of the heart, secretion, absorption, &c. when this is deficient in quantity, or abstracted, languor and debility succeed : this is more especially the case with digestion, as a nauseous idea will interrupt this process, and cause sickness and vomiting. Now the same state of the stomach will accompany any disagreeable, or painful sensation, as has been connected with that sensation, according to a law of association : hence that dislike which we acquire to certain kinds of food, with which we have been surfeited ; whenever the idea or disagreeable sensation occurs which accompanied the satiety, sickness, and vomiting take place.

So the depressing passions, such as fear, anxiety, and grief, by abstracting pleasure, cause indigestion ; and those which have been most frequently repeated, as anxiety and fear, become most intimately connected with this state of the stomach ; hence they are both the *causes, and companions* of Hypochondriasis.

The influence of fear over the state of the alimentary canal, is known to every observer.—

It is related of *Aratus*, the *Greek general*, that he was always seized with a diarrhoea before a battle, which continued until the engagement took place: an extraordinary attention of the mind has been found to counteract the operation of a cathartic.

INTENSE STUDY, acts chiefly by abstracting exercise, and thus bringing on indigestion: and here we have a striking instance of the strong connection between this state of the stomach, and the pain of fear, which dissevers at once those associations, that were accompanied with pleasure and delight, and introduces others attended with pain and misery!

The importance of the stomach cannot be too well considered, in the prevention and cure of disease. By its great influence, morbid action is diffused through every part of the body. The remote cause of disease often floats harmless in the system for a length of time: but if the person be suddenly affected with grief, terror, or surprise, the stomach immediately feels the shock, from which it is communicated to every part, and the noxious power operates upon the debilitated system. The stomach is the source from which every part receives its support, and when affected by disease, general debility follows, the universal predisposing cause of morbid action.

I come now to that part of my subject, arranged by nosologists, under the head of Diagnosis: but here I shall not attempt to point out any specific difference between Hypochondriasis, and those diseases, from which some have taken so much pains to distinguish it. Dr. Cullen remarks that Hypochondriasis differs from hysteria, in this being attended with more spasmodic affection, and in being often unaccompanied by dyspepsia, which in that is seldom, or never the case: in the one attacking the sanguine, and plethoric; the other the melancholic temperament: and lastly, in the latter appearing early in life, and declining as age advances; whilst the former seldom shows itself until late, and increases with years.

The variations in the two diseases arise from a difference in temperament and constitution.—Neither of them are peculiar to one sex only; although hysteria generally appears in females. Their habits of life are such, that those associations which constitute that gloomy train of fears, and apprehensions of evil, which distinguish the Hypochondriac, are less easily established, and hence not so strongly connected in them, as in the other sex. On this account, and also, from the disease appearing *early* in life, their trains of thought are readily broken: thus the hysteric disease is said to be constant only in inconstan-

cy : hence also we observe Hypochondriasis to put on the form of hysteria, after the old associations are weakened or in part dissevered.

It is distinguished from dyspepsia according to Doctor Cullen, *chiefly* by the *temperament* prevailing in the person affected. But if diseases are to be discriminated by the temperament, we shall have as many diseases as patients : for the limiting the number of temperaments to six, eight, or ten, is entirely arbitrary. No two persons are of the same temperament ; as it depends chiefly (A) upon the *nature* and mode of application of stimuli ; and these circumstances vary more or less, in every person on the globe.

The same author remarks that Hypochondriasis *differs* from melancholia, as in this there is an anxious fear and despondency arising from a mistaken judgment, with respect to *other circumstances* than those of health, and more especially in the patients being *without any dyspeptic* symptoms. But the habitual costiveness attending melancholic patients, manifests that torpor or inactivity of the stomach and alimentary canal,

(A) I say chiefly, because I believe no fact better established in medicine, than a *hereditary predisposition* to certain forms of disease ; but the influence of custom, in changing this original temperament or predisposition, has not been sufficiently considered. When this shall be more attended to, and better understood, we shall find that most of our diseases, like *yellow fever*, are of *domestic origin*.

common to dyspepsia and Hypochondriasis; whilst the variation in the mental affection, indicates a higher grade only of that, constituting the diseases above mentioned.

CURE.

The remedies for this disease are of two kinds.

First, those which act upon the body, but more particularly on the stomach and alimentary canal : such are,

CATHARTICS; as podophyllum peltatum, (May-apple) rhubarb, castor-oil; neutral-salts; mustard. Drastic purges should not be employed : from their violent stimulating property, they leave the stomach and intestines in a more torpid state than before, and thus increase the disease. In obstinate costiveness, a table spoonful of mustard-seed is, generally, a certain cathartic : it should be given unbruised, to avoid heating the stomach. An attempt to evacuate at regular periods, may be ranked amongst the best cathartics, in cases of habitual costiveness.

EMETICS, may sometimes be useful by rousing the stomach from its inactivity, but they should not be often repeated.

CARBONATES of lime, magnesia, and potash; soap; acid of vitriol. These relieve cardialgia, acidity, flatulency, &c.

TONICS AND STIMULANTS, to remove debility; as Peruvian bark, chalybeates, gentian, collumbo, quassia, cornus.

LEEK, 'ONION, GARLIC; these are excellent tonics in indigestion: one clove of unbruised garlic, may be taken morning and night, and increased to four or five.

Common salt, and lime juice; unskimmed milk; pepper corns; a blister to the pit of the stomach; moderate friction all over the body; compression; flannel shirt.

WARM BATH, is an excellent remedy and cannot be too strongly recommended; it restores the excitement of the system, and protracts the debility of age.

COLD BATH, may be used when the excitement is somewhat restored.

ELECTRICITY, GALVANISM. These act upon the body as general stimuli; and on the mind by diverting the patient's attention from himself.

WINE. The patient may indulge in wine provided it be *old and sound*; but spirits, brandy, &c. should be used with caution; they may give *temporary* relief, but in the end they are *generally* injurious: in some cases, however, old and genuine spirits agree with the patient better than wine.

OPIUM; HYOSCEAMUS; TINCTURE OF HOP. These relieve troublesome watchfulness, spasms,

&c. opium is, perhaps, the least proper of the three, as it is most apt to induce costiveness, which should be carefully avoided. Extract of henbane may be given from one grain to eight or ten, or even in larger doses: it is a safe, though active medicine, and generally leaves the bowels in a *natural state*. Tincture of hop, very frequently agrees with those persons, who cannot take opium, and is made as follows:

℞. Hum. lup. ʒ. iv.

Spt. vin. rect. ʒ. xii. F. Tinct. S. A.

Cujus sumat 50 ad 90 gtts. vel. P. R. N.

In treating this disease, the medicine should be frequently changed, to accommodate the patient, who seizes with avidity upon every new remedy. The aliment should consist of such food, as does not easily ferment, as oysters, clams, sea biscuit, toasted cheese, &c. The gastric juice of such animals, as subsist upon animal food, would probably be useful, in assisting the digestive process, in many cases, where there is a deficiency of this fluid. Potation of all kinds should be sparingly used.

We come now to the second and most difficult part of the cure; the treatment of the patient's mind.

“ Pourquoi subtiliser, et faire le capable,

A chercher des raisons pour être misérable ? ”

The deprivation of judgment in the patient respecting the state of his health, arises from his fixed, and constant attention to it, proceeding in the first place from fear. In this state of mind surrounding objects make little or no impression; and whatever sensations occur, produce a corresponding perception of those objects, that formerly caused the sensations, and with which they have become connected by a law of association. Thus certain sensations produce, in the patient, the perception of glass, and objects present, not being attended to, do not interrupt his train of ideas, and the properties of glass become associated with the perception of it; the patient, therefore, avoids contact with hard substances.

The same doctrine applies to all the extravagant fancies and groundless fears of Hypochondriac patients. Hence the inefficacy of reason to convince them of their errors, and the necessity of coinciding with them in opinion, *until the train of their ideas are disconcerted by an impression stronger than the one you wish to remove.*

It is worthy of remark, that the patients love to believe themselves worse than they really are. Thus ideas, at first painful, by repetition, cease to be so, and, at length, even become pleasurable; analogous to the use of tobacco, and other

poisonous substances, that are at first nauseous and disagreeable to the taste, but, by use, gradually become less so, until they are rendered a source of pleasure and delight. The same laws are alike applicable in the cure of both diseases.

Having laid down the principles, by which we are to be guided in the cure, the means will of course be suggested : I will mention a few of them : such are,

Amusements of all kinds; cheerful company; exercise; travelling; rousing the passions, as joy; hope; anger; sailing in a balloon; flagellation, &c.

We sometimes meet with cases, that have continued a length of time, in which few, or no dyspeptic symptoms are present: here the cause which produced the affection of the mind, by a law of habit, is no longer necessary to its continuance. Such cases are most difficult of cure. a salivation kept up for some weeks, or months, might be effectual; at the same time using proper means to amuse the patient, which should be persisted in, even after the cure is effected: if this be neglected, from a predisposition to disease still remaining, the patient will be likely to relapse into his former habits of thought.

Hypochondriac patients sometimes seek opportunities of committing suicide, to put an end to their miserable existence. In this it is proper to

indulge them to a certain degree, if practicable, as in drowning, burning, &c. by which means the old train of thought will be broken, and to an abhorrence will succeed the desire of life.

FINIS.

Med. Hist.

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